



## Panel requests cost for Coakley treatment system

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CONCORD -- The Commission on the Seacoast Cancer Cluster Investigation took three key votes Friday morning concerning the Coakley landfill Superfund cleanup site.

State Rep, Mindi Messmer, D-Rye, said the bipartisan commission passed a motion to ask the federal Environmental Protection Agency to report back to it on how much it would cost to either install a pump-and-treat system to remove dangerous chemicals from the landfill or to “mine the landfill.”

“We asked about a pump-and-treat system and we asked about having them dig it up and take what’s in the landfill away and bring it to a lined landfill,” Messmer, who serves on the commission, said about its Friday morning meeting.

Tests on monitoring wells around the landfill have found PFASs and 1,4-dioxane, both suspected carcinogens, at levels above the EPA’s health advisory levels. PFASs are per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances.

Many people living near the landfill in Greenland and North Hampton are worried chemicals leaching from it will contaminate their residential drinking wells, but so far PFCs found in private wells have tested below the EPA’s health advisory level.

Messmer believes there’s still a lot they don’t know about what might be in the 27-acre landfill that accepted solid waste from 1972 to 1982 and then incinerator waste until 1985.

“We don’t know what we don’t know,” Messmer said. “If that landfill took anything and everything, what’s the next threat we’re going to be facing?”

An EPA representative attended Friday’s meeting, but made no commitment about returning with the cost estimates, Messmer said.

The commission also asked N.H. Fish & Game for a formal commitment not to stock fish in Berry’s brook, which is located next to the landfill, and is contaminated with high levels of PFASs.

A Fish & Game representative who attended the meeting said the department doesn’t plan

to stock the brook in March, which is its normal stocking time, Messmer said.

The commission also agreed to officially ask for a copy of the contract between the Coakley Landfill Group and their lobbyist, Messmer said. The CLG is made up of municipalities and groups that used the landfill, along with companies that transported trash there. The groups and municipalities have been required to pay into a trust created through a 1991 record of decision by the EPA and N.H. Department of Environmental Services. The city of Portsmouth has to pay 53.6 percent of remediation costs at the landfill, according to the record of decision.

Portsmouth's City Attorney Robert Sullivan, who serves on the CLG's executive committee, told the Portsmouth Herald in December that the group hired the lobbyist. Messmer said the lobbyist told her he would lobby against her PFAS-related legislation, something he has denied.

Asked this week if the lobbyist would lobby against Messmer's legislation, Sullivan said, "no decisions along those lines have been made by the CLG. It is however possible."

Messmer acknowledged the commission can't compel the EPA or CLG to act, but said she was pleased with Friday's unanimous votes by the bipartisan commission.

"I'm very satisfied with the way the commission chair Rep. Charles McMahon (a Windham Republican) takes these issues seriously for the Seacoast community and is really spearheading the effort to move forward with what we consider to be a really serious public health threat," Messmer said. "These actions are aimed at preventing people from getting cancer."

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